

# Retreat Rules and Practices

## Harmonious Practices towards a Noble Community Living

- All participants are to observe the **8 precepts**. Those with permission from the meditation teacher due to physical sickness may be exempted from observing the **sixth precept**.

### **The 8 precepts are:**

- **1<sup>st</sup>**: Abstaining from killing any living being.
- **2<sup>nd</sup>**: Abstaining from taking what is not given.
- **3<sup>rd</sup>**: Abstaining from sexual activity.
- **4<sup>th</sup>**: Abstaining from wrong speech—lying, gossiping, divisive, or harsh speech.
- **5<sup>th</sup>**: Abstaining from intoxicants.
- **6<sup>th</sup>**: Abstaining from eating after noon (i.e. drinking milk, soy milk, milo, 3 in 1 coffee, etc.)
- **7<sup>th</sup>**: Abstaining from dancing, singing, listening to music, watching movies, or adorning oneself with garlands and perfumes.
- **8<sup>th</sup>**: Abstaining from using high or luxurious seats & beds.

(Keeping these precepts helps to achieve samatha (tranquillity) states of mind by managing sense desires and self-aggrandizing practices)

- Observe **noble silence** at all times to protect your own meditation as well as that of others. Noble silence promotes inner peace.
- For residential retreats, surrender your **cell phone** at the registration counter when checking in. For one-day retreats, turn off your cell phone or set it to silent mode.
- **Do not use alarms** during waking hours. We will arrange for a morning wake-up gong according to the retreat schedule.
- **Do not use beeping watches** during sitting meditation. We harmoniously use retreat timers and chimes, and learn to live as a peaceful community.
- **Do not use perfumes or scented products.**
- Carry out your daily activities mindfully to maintain your practice and to avoid disturbing fellow participants. Do things mindfully and silently. **Noise disturbs the mind.**
- **Remain in the retreat compound** throughout the retreat.
- Be sensitive to the proper mode of conduct for men and women within a monastic setting. **Segregation of gender is mandatory**, and no man should enter a woman's lodgings (or vice versa) under normal circumstances.
- **Do not loiter** around the office, dining hall, or lodging, engaging in chatting.
- **Do not bring any valuables** to the retreat. Retreat organizers are not liable for any personal belongings lost during the retreat.
- Place all **water bottles** outside the meditation hall. Noise from water is amazingly distracting in the silence of the peaceful hall.
- Wear your **name tag** at all times for identification purposes.
- **The retreat's timetable** will be displayed outside the hall and at other appropriate places.
- Do not do **walking meditation** inside the meditation hall, as it can disturb fellow participants. Walking meditation can be done outside the meditation hall or inside the dining hall.
- You are encouraged to sit through each meditation session until the bell rings. You may practice **standing meditation** if sitting becomes unbearable.
- You will be **allocated a bed in which to sleep**. Please use it throughout the retreat and do not switch with other participants, unless it is absolutely necessary and you have obtained permission from the retreat committee.
- AVMC reserves the right to require a **retreatant who violates the rules** to leave the center with a minimum of 24 hours' notice. One verbal warning will be given first. This right shall be exercised in rare circumstances and in the best interests of the other residents at the center.
- **Interview sessions** are optional. If you would like an interview, write your name on the whiteboard.

- All participants will be assigned a 30-50 minute **cleaning job**, to help maintain the environment.

## **Other General Matters**

### **House Rules**

- Clothes washing is not allowed for retreats less than three days—please bring enough clothes for that time.
- Washing is allowed for retreats that are four days and longer.

### **Dana (Donation)**

- All dana or cash donations will be collected at the registration counter during check-in on the first day and at check-out on the last day of the retreat.